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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PHUM PREL MR  
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON PRIME MINISTER ON THE CASE OF HANEVY  
OULD DEHAH

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 41  
    1B. NOUAKCHOTT 14  
    1C. 09 NOUAKCHOTT 823  
    1D. 09 NOUAKCHOTT 549

11. (SBU) Ambassador called on Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Lagdaf at the latter's request for a discussion of various items of current interest (septel). Ambassador took the opportunity to raise with the Prime Minister the continuing arbitrary detention of internet journalist Hanevy Ould Dehah. Noting that he had just returned from a brief visit to Washington, Ambassador pointed out that he had received many inquiries while there about the case. He observed further that an editorial condemning the detention had just appeared in the Wall Street Journal. While underscoring the importance of the principles involved, Ambassador also urged that Mauritania reflect on the negative impact to its image and to the ability of friends to mobilize support. In the case of the USG, he said, it was particularly regrettable to see such a high profile case at a time when Secretary Clinton was so personally engaged in a campaign for internet freedom.

12. (SBU) Accepting copies of both the Journal article and the Secretary's January 21 internet freedom remarks, the Prime Minister agreed that the matter was &unfortunate8 and noted that it was widely and openly debated in Mauritania, as well as internationally. Without making any specific commitments, he joined the Ambassador in hoping that the matter could be quickly resolved. He thanked the Ambassador for engaging him candidly.

13. (SBU) Comment: Observers here remain puzzled at the GIRM's inept handling of this case and its reluctance to date to cut its losses. Following the Supreme Court's decision to throw out the previous five month sentence that Ould Dehah completed on December 24, 2009, the court is now expected to make its &new8 ruling within a day or two. Opinion is divided over whether the case will be thrown out or additional prison time added.

BOULWARE